

THE LUTHERAN 

JUNE 2007

AMBASSADOR



just
SHARE
IT

Whether it's a
baseball clinic for
kids, feeding the
poor, or providing
a stable home
for a child,
it's time to take
Christ's message
of love and hope
to your neighbors.

The pursuit

BY PASTOR TIM HINRICHS



It was a dark and cold night when I heard the sound of a man walking fast in the shadows down the street behind me. He was hot on my trail. My porch light was already in view, but my pursuer was getting closer. I decided to break into a run. He did, too. Finally arriving at the door, my hands were shaking so much I couldn't find the right key. As I turned around, I realized in horror that it was too late and ... I woke up.

Maybe you've had a dream like that. You're running from the enemy to where it's safe and secure. Could it be that your pursuer is not really the enemy?

Psalm 23:6 says: "Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever." In the original Hebrew, the word "follow" literally means "pursue" or "chase down." It's a word that's often used for armies pursuing their enemies. An example is when Pharaoh chased the Israelites who were trapped at the Red Sea. If you are on the other end of this chase, it's absolutely frightening!

The question is, why does God have to chase us down with goodness and mercy? We should be receiving these wonderful gifts with open arms. Who doesn't want goodness or mercy? Maybe you run from it because mercy indicates weakness or a failure and inability to handle life. It's making the clear statement: "I need help!"

The American way of independence is "picking yourself up by the bootstraps." We don't want to show any weakness. Instead, we think if we try harder, we can do anything. The fact is we can't make it. We fail constantly. We disappoint ourselves, our family, the people around us, and most of all God. One of the hardest things to admit is that we are weak and need help.

God's pursuit of us is not just a question of the mercy and goodness that comes during salvation. He still has to pursue us after we are "born again." Why?

I continue to have this attitude concerning the everyday needs of my life — I simply can make it without any help. But the reality is I can't handle everything life throws at me. I really can't deal with all those problems, so God pursues me with brothers and sisters in the Lord. God sends goodness and mercy in the form of people in my life. He's going to bless me and provide for me. The sad part is when I say, "No thanks! I can handle it!" Self-sufficiency is simply pride.

Sometimes it's the hardest thing to turn around and simply receive the goodness and mercy God sends me in the way of others. It's humbling. God's goodness and mercy will chase me every day of my life until I finally tire out, trip up or fall face down in the mud. Things aren't going to get any better until I face the fact: "I can't handle it!" Only then will I realize the wonderful way the Lord wants to bless me with His mercy and goodness.

It's not a nightmare after all, but a dream come true!

Hinrichs, a missionary in Poland, is an AFLC pastor on loan to the East European Missions Network.

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God has placed us in a specific community at a particular time. We're called to love those around us.

— Charles Colson

[God's grace does not exist to make us successful. God's grace exists to point people to a love like no other love they have ever known.]

— Michael Yaconelli

Attempt something so impossible that unless God is in it, it's doomed to failure.

— John Haggai

For some people confirmation is the outstanding experience in their spiritual life. For others an emotional experience may have more meaning. It matters little how or when these experiences came; the important thing is that a person decides in his heart to serve Christ and Him alone.

— Iver Olson
“Baptism and Spiritual Life”

“Be confident in this,
that He who began a good work
in you will carry it on
until the day of Christ ...”

PHILIPPIANS 1:6

planting SEEDS OF FAITH

BY JOSSIE NIELSEN

Christina was left in the family car alone while her father spent hours in the local casino. Joey’s parents can’t hold down a job because of their drinking habits. Michael’s stepfather shook him so hard that he may be scarred for life.

You’ve probably heard their stories on the evening news. Have they moved you? These stories were the motivation I needed to get licensed for foster care.

In 1853 a minister named Charles Loring Brace created a plan that became the foundation for the foster care system today. Although admittedly fraught with problems, the plan Brace instituted shows that he recognized society’s role in caring for its children.

Foster care does just that. It provides care for children who cannot, for a wide variety of reasons, live with their own families. Licensed foster parents provide the child with a temporary family and give them a safe, stable place to grow until a plan of permanency can be put in place for the child.

Some of the earliest documentation of children being fostered in homes can be found in the Old Testament. These references establish caring for dependant children as a duty to all Christians. Early Christian records also recall children boarding with “worthy widows” who were paid by congregational collections.

Being a foster parent is more than offering food and shelter. It’s about planting seeds. We constantly plant the seeds of self-confidence, love, hope and joy for children who have had so little of these things. Once in your home and established in your family, foster children can be shown a love that will last long after we, the foster parents, are gone. They so need to know, due to the often unstable environments they come from, that God loves them no matter what! Those of us who heard about God’s love all through childhood cannot appreciate what this kind of care means to these young people who find it hard to believe that anything good in this world can last.

If a child is with you long enough, you can water that



seed through teaching and example. However, the goal in foster care is often to reunify the biological family once the problems that instigated their separation have been addressed. Often the view of the state differs from the view we have as foster parents when it comes to reassembling the family unit. It is hard to feel your job is done when the child leaves your care.

Our social service system is nowhere near perfect, but when our time as caregivers for a child has passed, we need to give it to God because “neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything but only God, who makes things grow. The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor” (I Corinthians 3:7-8).

Foster parenting requires no extraordinary talent, just patience, flexibility and the ability to provide a loving home. If you cannot open your home to a child, there are many things you can do to support your local foster homes.

Like the piano teacher next door who offered to teach our foster child piano lessons free of charge. These acts of generosity mean so much!

Often when children are placed with us, they come with nearly nothing in terms of personal items. Sometimes we wait weeks for authorization to purchase things for them. To have someone bring over like-new clothing or toys is a tremendous help. Other ideas include purchasing park passes, donating baby supplies or tutoring a child.

It is hard to completely explain the joy of sowing these seeds in a child’s heart or the sadness of being unable to change their paths. Please remember, though, each of these “cases” are children, children with pasts and futures, and children of God. So sow generously, brothers and sisters; the seeds of faith are hardy in zones 0-10.

Nielsen is a member of Zion Lutheran, Tioga, N.D.

Language OF KIDS

BY PASTOR MARK JOHNSON

What kid doesn't want to take a whack at a baseball or try to catch a fly ball? Each summer, like many churches throughout the world, our parish hosts a vacation Bible school program for area youths. Each year we ask ourselves how we can tie into our community more, how we can be out on the "streets" seeking out other kids and adults in order to introduce them to Christ.

Last year, through the help of a generous grant from the AFLC Commission on Evangelism, the Dalton Free Lutheran Parish hosted an afternoon baseball/softball clinic leading up to our evening VBS. As a parish we saw the clinic as a great opportunity to reach out to kids in our area and use it as a means to invite other kids to VBS.

To our surprise and with thankfulness to God, about 60 kids participated in the clinic. Many, if not all, were also involved in our evening VBS, which drew about 150 preschool to high-school aged students. Our main goal wasn't to try to turn kids into the next Joe Mauer or Alex Rodriguez, but simple to invite them to VBS and — more importantly — to a growing, personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

In an effort to tie into our community, the first thing we did was offer to clean up and ready the community ball field for the camp. Next, we gathered equipment from some of our local schools: bats, balls, helmets, batting tees and pitching and hitting screens. During this time, people would ask questions about what was going on. As we mailed out our VBS invitations to kids, we included in

them an opportunity for parents to bring their kids to the ball diamond, with a sack lunch supper in hand. As parents registered for the event, we had an opportunity to talk to parents we may not have talked to otherwise.

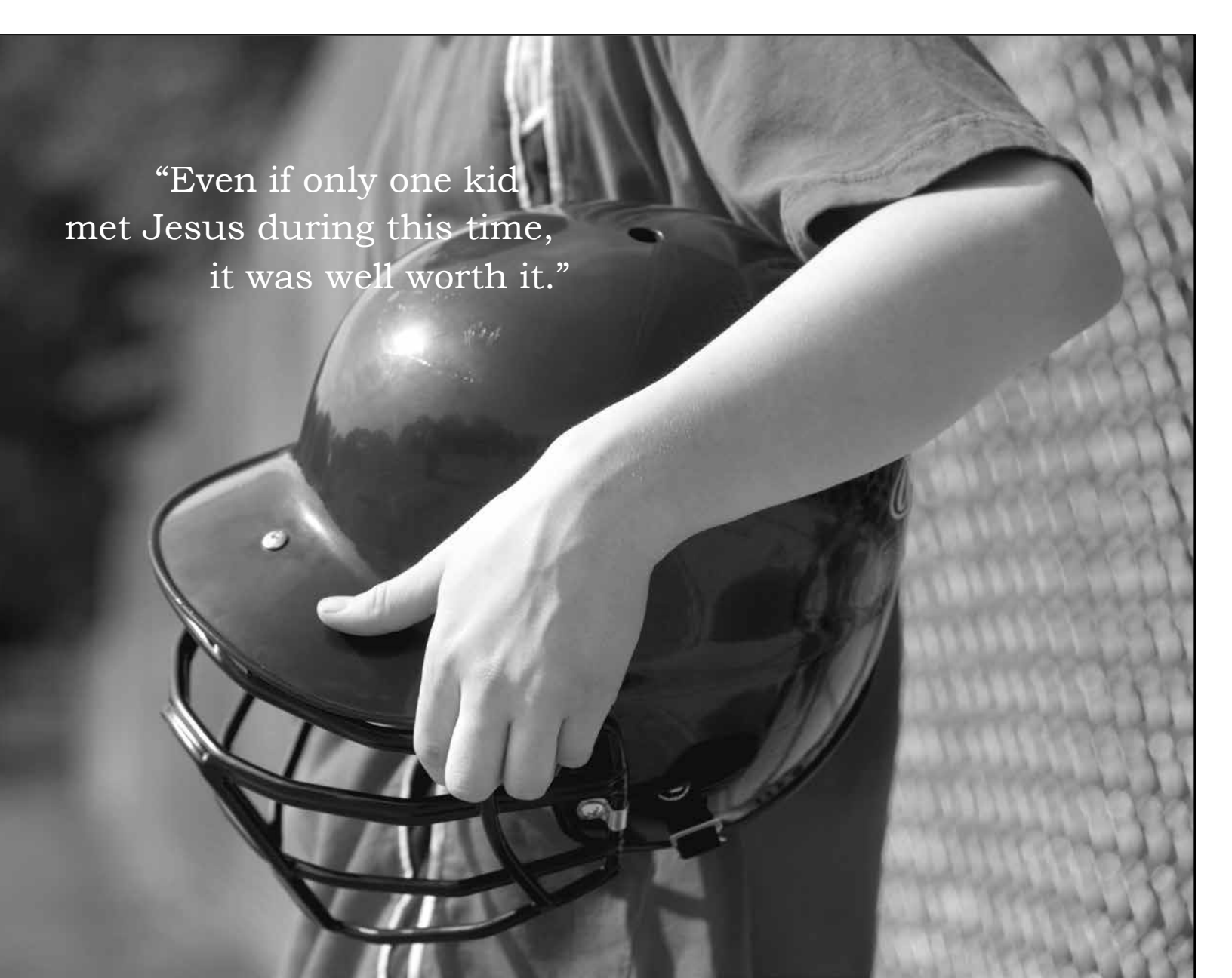
In an effort to promote the clinic, God provided a great opportunity to talk about the outreach event on our local radio sports talk show.

If your congregation is thinking about a similar outreach, here are some details and ideas that might be helpful in reaching out in your area. We ran the clinic each day from 3-5 p.m. in hopes that after our time of devotions and supper we would walk the kids over to the church for our 6-8 p.m. evening VBS.

During the two-hour clinic we divided the kids into four groups according to age and ability: kindergarten through second grade, third and fourth grade, fifth and sixth grade, and seventh through ninth grade. The senior high students got involved by assisting with the clinic.

We broke into several stations, including hitting, throwing, pitching, base running and fielding, which also included games for each age group. We were thankful to have a former Minnesota Gopher and Minnesota Twins minor leaguer with us one day to help us with pitching and hitting.

At the close of our time together we gathered for devo-



“Even if only one kid
met Jesus during this time,
it was well worth it.”

tions with different guest speakers, followed by a sack lunch supper. On the closing day we had a water balloon throwing contest, gave away some Minnesota Twins tickets and other prizes and provided a barbecue supper for the kids. Then the processional to the church for VBS would begin. We marched to the church together, and the kids had about 30-45 minutes of free time before VBS started.

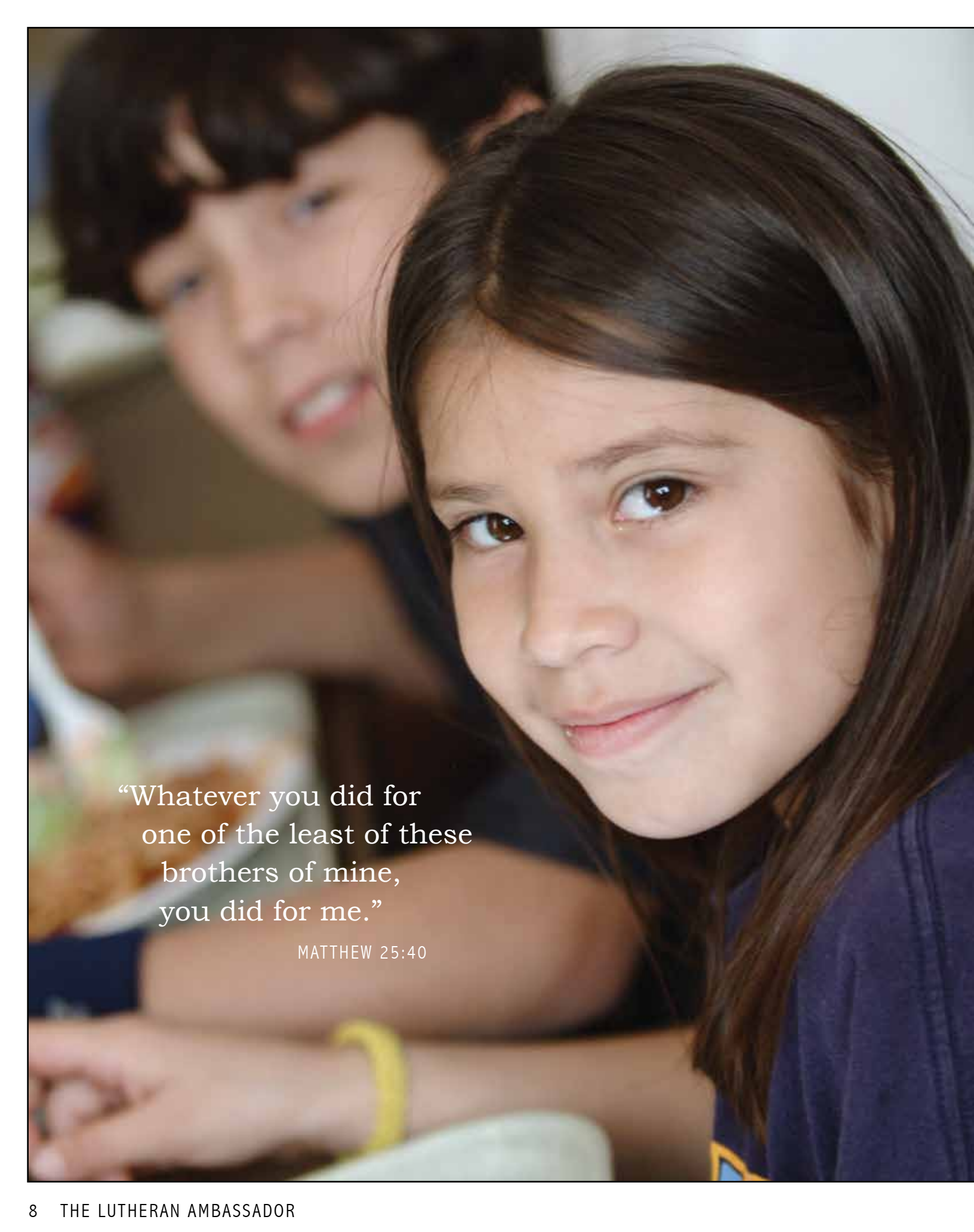
As we prayed about this outreach event and watched God at work we learned a lot. There are kids and adults all around us who need Jesus Christ. Even in a town of 150 people in rural Minnesota there are scores of people. Luke 19:10 says that Jesus came to “seek and to save the lost.” Even if only one kid met Jesus during this time, it was well worth it.

We continue to learn that God opens doors for His Word through different activities and events. One way to speak the “language” of kids is by doing something with them that they love. In this case it happened to be through a bat, a ball and a glove.

Another thing that stood out to us is how different people in our congregation and community showed up and wanted to help — the local grocery store owner, neighboring high school coaches, the city maintenance head, and different people from our congregation who may not feel comfortable serving in another area of the ministry. For us it was a stretching experience and a time of growth. God impressed upon the hearts of those involved that He can use each gift that we have for His glory in building up His kingdom.

As we think about reaching people for Christ, we realize that it is only by His grace and through the power of the gospel as the Holy Spirit does His work. In the meantime don’t be afraid to try something different and watch God work. Every day people are dying without the Lord. God has given us the privilege of serving, even by simply picking up a bat and a ball.

Johnson is assistant pastor of the Dalton, Minn., parish of Kvam, Tordenskjold and Zion-Sarpsburg Lutheran.



“Whatever you did for
one of the least of these
brothers of mine,
you did for me.”

MATTHEW 25:40

feed MY SHEEP

BY JOSHUA WILSON

I was driving down a Virginia highway in late September to meet with some friends. We were planning to clear a little brush at the farm where we hunted and to celebrate the landowner's birthday with a barbecue. About five miles before turning down the gravel farm lane, I spotted a woman standing by her car with the trunk open. Because I was a little late, I was tempted not to stop, but now I'm glad I did.

From her dress and the condition of her old car patched in many colors, it appeared the woman was not well off. When I asked if her car was broken down, she said, "No, but could you please help me over here beside these bushes?"

Hesitantly, I followed and spotted a fat but slightly battered six-point buck next to her car. I asked if she had hit the deer with her car and she said she had not.

"Could you help me put it in my trunk?" she asked.

I explained that unless she reported the deer to the state police or a wildlife officer she could be issued a citation for transporting an untagged deer.

She looked into my eyes and slowly answered, "I don't care ... my kids and me are hungry."

With that response I realized she was anxious for help, not talk. So we loaded the deer into the back of her car. As she closed the lid of her trunk I asked, "Would you like me to field dress it for you?" Her reply answered any remaining questions.

"No, since my husband left, my kids and me are gettin' good at it. Doing it later keeps them from bleeding all over my trunk."

Standing there as she drove away I knew I had just looked into the eyes of Jesus who said (in Matthew 25) that whenever we help one of the least of His brothers and sisters we are actually serving Him.

My dad still recalls this encounter from 10 years ago as if it happened last week. He didn't know that this was the beginning of an incredible mission from God to feed hungry children and families — a mission that would eventually grow to include the time and talents of hundreds nationwide.

That year we became aware of a program called Virginia Hunters Who Care, which collects extra deer from hunters to provide meat to the needy of the state. The program raises financial support all year long to cover the costs of butchering the deer so that hunters can donate them free of charge.

After donating numerous deer harvested from the farm in Virginia, Dad knew that he had to bring the same opportunity for hunters to feed the hungry free of charge back to our home state. During the fall of 1997, Farmers and Hunters Feeding the Hungry (FHHF) was born as a ministry of our church in Washington County, Maryland. That first season enough money was raised to process and distribute 3,800 pounds of venison — enough for more than 15,000 meals!

(Continued on page 18)

“Evangelism is to be
centered around
the proclaiming
of the Word of God ...”

Apologetics & **EVANGELISM**

BY JOE FALDET



Is there a place for apologetics in evangelism? If so, where? To begin with we need to define two terms. *Apologetics* comes from a Greek word meaning “to defend oneself” with the connotation that the accusation is false. The word *apology* is the defense itself. The modern connotation of apologetics is that it is the rational, scientific and archaeological defense of Christianity.

Evangelism comes from another Greek word meaning “good news; gospel.” To evangelize is to proclaim good news. Today, specifically, that good news is the gospel, the fact that Jesus Christ was crucified to atone for the sins of humanity and was raised again, that He has reconciled mankind to God.

So back to the question of apologetics and evangelism. To answer it we need to look at some commonly quoted verses on this topic.

The first verse is I Peter 3:15: “But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you ...” A literal reading is, “always being prepared to make an apology to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you ...” The word *defense* here comes from the root word *apology*. We are to be able to give an answer concerning our hope. In I Peter 1:25, we are given the reason for that hope: “‘The word of the Lord remains forever.’ And this word is the good news that was preached [evangelized] to you.” So the reason for the hope that is in us is the gospel. Our apology is to be the gospel. This is a directive to always have the word of the gospel upon our lips. This is not a directive to defend the gospel against skeptical accusations, but to proclaim it.

The next reference is written to Timothy, who was to “do the work of an evangelist” (II Timothy 4:5), and “preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching” (II Timothy 4:2). The word *preach* could also be translated *proclaim*. So this isn’t only speaking of a pulpit setting, but it is a general statement. “The word” is defining that which is to be preached. The command is “preach.” The question, “Preach what?” is answered by, “The word.” This isn’t saying that if Timothy reads the Scriptures out loud, then he has fully done his job. He is to teach them, meaning that he is to explain the Scriptures. His preaching is to center around that which God has inspired His prophets and apostles to write down; the Scripture is to be his authority, and it is to be ours as well.

Ephesians 2:19-22 shows that the Church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, with Christ the cornerstone. The reason for evangelism is to proclaim the gospel with the result that people might believe in it and so be saved to the building up of the Church to the glory of God. If an evangelist is trying to build the

Church apart from the foundation of the apostles, prophets and Christ, he is not building the Church. The glorious thing about evangelism is that it is nothing more than proclaiming truth.

Finally we have gotten to the heart of the question. The study of apologetics is good, commendable and deserving of the attention of every child of God, but apologetics is not the foundation of Christianity. We should study apologetics for the deepening of our faith and — especially in light of the prevalence of the attacks that Christians face in modern society — to give defense of why we believe what we believe. Yet we must remember that apologetics does not stand alone, it never has and never will. Evangelism is to be centered around the proclaiming of the Word of God, for only the Scriptures are able to make you wise unto salvation (II Timothy 3:15; Romans 10:17).

For a few practical examples of the place of apologetics in evangelism we need to look no further than the Scriptures. In the book of Acts we have the privilege of reading a number of evangelistic sermons proclaimed by both Peter and Paul. In many of these sermons they use forms of apologetics to support the proclamation of the Scriptures, which focused on the proclamation of the gospel. Note that in each of the sermons the gospel has the key place.

In Peter’s sermon on Pentecost he uses the manifestation of tongues as proof supporting the gospel. Before the Sanhedrin in Acts 4, the healing of the crippled man is an evidence, as well as the boldness of Peter and John, to the truth of the gospel. In Acts 10 Peter’s supernatural call is his apologetic to the proclamation of the life of Jesus Christ, concluding with the proclamation, “To Him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name” (Acts 10:43).

In Paul’s exhortation to the synagogue in Antioch there is no apologetic to open to the Scriptures, but only a proclamation of the gospel of the risen Savior. One of my favorite apologetic sermons is given in Acts 17 by Paul in Athens. Here Paul uses well reasoned arguments supported by the Athenians’ own thoughts to show why their basic thinking is faulty. He then moves into a gospel proclamation.

So what is the place of apologetics in evangelism? It is to support the proclamation of the gospel, which is rooted in the Scriptures. Apologetics cannot cause conversion; that is the work of the gospel alone. Preach the Word, be ready in season and out of season, and when necessary use reason, science and archaeology as a defense of the truthfulness of your proclamation.

Faldet, a middler at the Free Lutheran Seminary, is a member of Trinity Lutheran, McIntosh, Minn.

Bread FOR LIFE

BY PASTOR RICH CARR

Nearly four years ago a sermon preached one Sunday morning at Hope Lutheran Church challenged the congregation to use their newly remodeled kitchen for something other than an occasional potluck meal and funeral luncheons. The vision cast in the sermon urged the development of a soup kitchen that would feed the community twice a week.

A few days later a woman from our congregation said she heard about the idea of the soup kitchen and loved it. Then she said what every pastor loves to hear, “I would like to be in charge of this ministry and help get it organized.”

Shortly after this we developed a core group of four people who had a mutual desire to connect with people and share the love of Jesus through a community outreach meal. We developed a vision and mission statement for this ministry, as well as a name, Bread For Life. It was our hope that this meal would lead to people not just filling their bellies with the physical food that is here today and gone tomorrow, but with the spiritual bread that always keeps us satisfied, Jesus.

We developed an action plan to implement the meal, job descriptions for each job that would need to be filled, and formed our first executive board (the same four people) to oversee the dinner. We then took our plan to the church council for approval, who decided Bread for Life was indeed a worthy use of the church’s resources.

The next step was to get volunteers to actually do the work. We made various announcements in church and phone calls to individuals whom we felt had a heart for this outreach. We invited anyone who showed an interest in Bread For Life to an after-church meeting. When the time came for the meeting, the four of us on the executive committee had no idea how many people would show up and, frankly, if our plan would work. We had close to 40 people that first meeting. We were astounded! Perhaps this crazy idea would work after all.

With the manpower in place, we divided up the volunteers into four teams to share the workload. Each team would be responsible for one week a month, thereby minimizing burnout. With some research, we found a food pantry that would provide us with food at a greatly reduced price. They receive corporate food donations from compa-

nies like General Mills and Pillsbury, as well as government food subsidies. We also were given a small amount of startup money by the church to make this meal happen.

We decided from the beginning of Bread for Life that this would be a free meal, with no freewill offering taken. We wanted no pressure or guilt to fall on the people who attended the meals. Instead, the meals would be funded exclusively from freewill Sunday offerings from the congregation. A few months into the program, we applied for and received a \$1,600 grant from Thrivent. God was honoring our desire to make this meal free to all who came.

Bread For Life has been up and running now every Wednesday for about three and one-half years. In that time we’ve only had to cancel a meal four or five times due to conflicting events on the church calendar. We have also had a large turnover in volunteers, with very few of the original teams still serving. More than 100 individuals have volunteered during this time. On average we serve between 150 to 180 plates of food, with only about half of that number coming from church members who come to minister to others.

We have attempted various different outreach events surrounding the meal, with some more successful than others. They include prayer requests taken at each table, prayer counselors for those who desire it, and monthly outreach services such as skits, magic shows, gospel presentations, videos, and special lessons taught using PowerPoint. The best way to really reach people, though, is when our congregants take the time to build relationships with those we serve. Many of the homeless who come just want someone to know their names.

The real value of this meal is not only for the homeless and low-income individuals who attend, as important as that is. I have witnessed a huge change in the hearts and attitudes of our congregation members. As exciting as it is for church growth to happen from conversions of people often times thought unreachable, it is sometimes more exciting to see church goers develop a Christ-like attitude and heart because they follow Christ’s example of serving others.

Carr is executive pastor of Hope Lutheran, Minneapolis, Minn.

“Since there will never cease to be some in need
on the earth, I therefore command you, ‘Open your
hand to the poor and needy neighbor in your land.’”

— Deuteronomy 15:11



“Still other seed
fell on good soil.
It came up and
yielded a crop,
a hundred times
more than was sown.”

— LUKE 8:8



Evangelism. The word can send terror and dread into the heart of any congregant. Yet Jesus gave the command in Matthew 28:19: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations.” Why does sharing Jesus with others make you so uncomfortable? Why do you try everything possible not to have to do evangelism? Why is evangelism something that others should be doing and not you?

These are questions that are haunting many of you.

This past fall AFLC Evangelism Director Pastor Jim Rasmussen blessed the Culbertson, Mont., congregations of Bethel and Faith Free Lutheran with a two-day presentation based on Bill Fay’s “Share Jesus Without Fear.” Approximately 35 people attended.

Comments from the people were enlightening as they came to the realization that it was not up to them to

change a person’s heart, but to allow God’s Word and Spirit to do that work. In a way, light bulbs went off in their heads as they discovered what Jesus explained about the mystery of the Kingdom of God in Luke 8:11: “The seed is the Word of God.”

The congregations saw the truth in the Parable of the Soil from Luke 8:4-8. “And when a great multitude had gathered, and they had come to Him from every city, He spoke by a parable: ‘A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it. Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold.’ When He had said these things He cried, ‘He who has ears



sharing JESUS

BY PASTOR RICH RAMSBACHER

to hear, let him hear!”

The members of Bethel and Faith realized that *they* were to become the sowers of that Word. As they began sharing with others around our communities, they didn't worry where they sowed or the results of their sowing. If seed (the Word of God) fell on the wayside and the world trampled it or

the birds devoured it, they realized that God is in control. If the Word fell on rock and sprang up soon but withered away because it lacked moisture, they learned to leave it in God's hands. When the Word landed among thorns and was choked out by the world, God knew. But when God prepared the soil of the heart, they saw the yield of a hundredfold.

We learned that evangelism doesn't mean people you share with have to join your congregation. You should just celebrate that people are going to church and are hearing God's Word and worshipping Him. We also learned that if God has not prepared the soil of the heart, nothing will happen. But we are His instruments to reach the lost, so keep sowing. It is the Holy Spirit of God working through us to save, not us personally.

I heard some great comments from our members. “I

think I can do that” was a common statement. Or, “I would love to share Jesus with someone soon.” A lot of us realized that “it seems too easy but yet very doable.” Others said, “This is the first time I have felt that free to share.” And my favorite, from a young man who made just the last part of the presentation, “I want to be like Bill Fay and share everywhere I go.”

Some of you may be asking if the congregation has seen any results. Are we sharing Jesus without fear, and have the congregants become sowers of God's Word in their communities?

I have seen a certain commitment from the congregations in reaching out into our local communities. This commitment has manifested itself in a renewed heart among the people for reaching lost and wayward souls. Fay explains that some people come to Christ the first time they hear God's Word and other people may have to hear God's Word many times before their hearts have been prepared to be converted and accept Jesus. We realize that people we have known for years and may have even given up as hopelessly lost are still worth the effort of sharing Christ. They may still be saved. Our congregations have always been wonderful at caring for the needs of others. Now we have found courage and a renewed desire to reach the lost.

Ramsbacher serves the Montana congregations of Bethel Community, Culbertson, and Faith Free Lutheran, Brockton.

The AFLC's Catechism
has been reprinted

Teach it to your **CHILDREN**

BY LOIELL DYRUD

Oh, read the catechism every day and read it to your children. I keep it next to my Bible and not a day goes by that I don't read both. And the older I get, the more I understand the importance of the Lutheran Doctrine."

This was the comment I often heard from one of the older men in our congregation when our children were young. Though he may not have been highly educated, he was grounded in Scripture and had great respect for our Lutheran heritage.

Sorry to say, I did not take his advice. But after working for more than two years on updating our AFLC catechism, I am beginning to see how wise he was. For I, too, am learning to understand the significance of biblical Lutheran teaching, and with that understanding comes a deep appreciation for the catechism.

What an opportunity the catechism provides for young and old alike. What an opportunity for parents to teach their children the essential truths of Scripture in the home and for parents who home school to teach their children the catechism along with their lessons. What an opportunity for adults to become more grounded in their faith! And with this new, updated text the catechism will be more accessible to all.

In 2004, as the supply of our catechisms dwindled, the Board of Publications and Parish Education was faced with a dilemma: either reprint the original "Luther's Small Catechism Explained," which had not been updated in 80 years, or begin the updating process for a new catechism. The decision to update was not taken lightly.

Nevertheless, under the guidance of the Coordinating Committee, we began the process and at the same time began discovering the unique history of our AFLC catechism, which dates back well over 300 years.

In 1737, Erik Pontoppidan, a chaplain to the King of Denmark, wrote an explanation to "Luther's Small Catechism" called "Truth Unto Godliness." Based on an earlier German work by Philip Spener, "A Simple Explanation of Christian Teaching," Pontoppidan's explanation contained 759 questions and answers and was used for instructing Denmark's young people in Luther's catechism.

Because Norway was under Danish rule, Pontoppidan's work also became the text for teaching Norway's children. In 1864, the State Church of Norway instructed Harald Ulrich Sverdrup (the father of Georg Sverdrup, one of the founders of the Lutheran Free Church in America) to update and condense Pontoppidan's work. In 1893, Norway's Department of Church and Education had Sverdrup's catechism abridged to 388 questions and answers, the length of our catechism today.

"H.U. Sverdrup's Explanation," as it was known, became the standard throughout Norway. When emigrants crossed the Atlantic, Sverdrup's "Explanation" accompanied them, becoming an intersynodical catechism used in many Lutheran denominations in this country, as well. The Lutheran Free Church, our precedent church body, adopted the Sverdrup text in 1897 and translated it into English in 1900. A slight revision of the "Explanation" was made in 1929, and the 1901 American Standard Version became the text for Bible references.

After it was organized in 1962, the AFLC reprinted the original LFC catechism ten more times without revision. Understanding the AFLC's reluctance to tamper with the doctrinal content of the catechism, we viewed our task from the beginning as primarily updating the language and format.

As a result, the most readily observable change is the introduction of color. Martin Luther's Seal appears in full

color with its description on the facing page. Four full-color posters illustrating the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Sacraments have been reduced to page size and introduce their corresponding sections in "Luther's Small Catechism." Furthermore, all questions throughout the catechism appear in blue while answers and Bible verses are in black.

Some additions to the catechism have also been made. Pastor Robert Lee has written a brief biography of Martin Luther as well as the introduction to the "Explanation." All the creeds — the Apostles, the Nicene, and the Athanasian — have been included in the appendix with introductions by Pastor Jerry Moan.

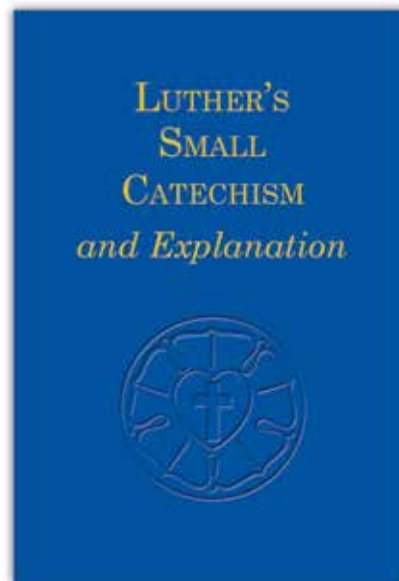
At pastors' request, more Bible verses have been added to the "Explanation," resulting in a somewhat larger catechism. We have also updated the 1901 American Standard Version to the New American Standard Bible (1995 Updated Edition).

More significantly, the title of our original text — "Luther's Small Catechism Explained" — caused no small amount of confusion. Many wondered how much was Luther's work. Did Luther also write the questions and answers in the "Explanation"?

The problem arises primarily from the fact that our catechism is actually two separate books: "Luther's Small Catechism" followed by "H.U. Sverdrup's Explanation." Unless a person happened to come across the second title page that followed immediately after the conclusion of "Luther's Small Catechism," no mention of Sverdrup appeared thereafter. No wonder the authorship of the "Explanation" was confusing. To rectify the problem, the board has changed the title to "Luther's Small Catechism and Explanation," hoping that the additional word "and" will indicate that two separate entities are included in one book. Furthermore, page headers have been added to indicate which book the reader is in.

In another attempt to identify who is writing which part of the catechism, we used blue-shaded text boxes whenever Luther's work reappears in the "Explanation."

Words and phrases that had become



archaic or difficult for people to understand are replaced with words more commonly used today. For example, "quick" has been changed to "living," "aught" to "anything," "raiment" to "clothing," and so forth. Punctuation, too, has been updated to reflect more contemporary usage.

Where an answer seemed unclear or vague, the board went back to the original Norwegian of Sverdrup's text (in some cases even back to Pontoppidan's text). Several different translations of the "Explanation" were also examined. Every effort was made to communicate faithfully the original meaning of the text. No words were eliminated from or added to the text unless a clearer translation from the Norwegian could be made. And although we had requests to add or cut portions from certain answers, we refrained from doing so. In all cases, we tried to maintain the doctrinal integrity of the original.

As board members, we have been enormously blessed by this opportunity to serve. Present members (Pastor John Mundfrom, Pastor Les Johnson, Jan Strand, Fern Bohling, and myself) sincerely wish to thank Pastor Philip Haugen and Pastor Martin Horn who served on the board at the beginning of the project and whose insight and expertise have been sought continuously throughout the process. We trust, too, that the enormous patience, dedication, and attention to detail of our director, Marian Christopherson, has been reflected in the quality of the finished product.

With our new catechism finally printed, it is our prayer that it will continue to be a blessing to our students as they study the Word of God and the Lutheran doctrine in their confirmation classes. But it is our further intent that the catechism would have a wider readership. Today, at a time when "shallow" Christianity is all too often a substitute for truth, we believe "Luther's Catechism" provides an anchor "a deep, solid mooring" for every child and adult who studies its simple, yet eloquently stated, doctrines of the Christian faith. *To God be the glory!*

Dyrud, who lives in Thief River Falls, Minn., is a member of the Board of Publications and Parish Education.



“We’ve been overjoyed
to see the lives
of many of our
chapter coordinators
transformed ...”

— JOSHUA WILSON

(Continued from page 9)

Over the next few years, FHFH grew into a statewide ministry and eventually became a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. FHFH has been blessed with some excellent television and magazine coverage attracting the attention of hundreds of people interested in feeding the hungry of their communities. The organization has now grown to include more than 100 local chapters in more than 25 states across America. Together these chapters now provide meat for more than a million meals to feed the hungry each year.

You may be wondering if those who receive the meat like it — particularly those in places where eating game meat is no longer common practice. Shortly after FHFH began, a number of people gathered to help prepare and serve venison spaghetti at a church soup kitchen in Baltimore. During dinner, one little girl proclaimed, “This is better than the food we ate at the restaurant last night!” The cook was quietly asked how the girl and her family could afford to eat out one night and then find themselves at a soup kitchen the next. “I know that family,” she said. “They eat from the dumpsters behind local restaurants.” At that point we knew for certain we had to find a way to process every deer available to us.

FHFH pays inspected, approved meat processors and lockers to cut, package and freeze game donated by successful hunters. The meat then makes its way to local shelters and soup kitchens and also to larger regional food banks.

Most feeding ministries will tell you that fresh meat is their most sought after yet least available food resource.

We’ve been overjoyed to see the lives of many of our chapter coordinators transformed as they get into the trenches to feed God’s hungry children. Some who had long since abandoned the faith of their childhood have been compelled to reconnect with Jesus and the Church. Others with no faith background have been introduced to the power of God as they see lives transformed physically and spiritually through their work with FHFH.

A number of people are also adding FHFH to their existing church men’s ministry or using it as the basis to begin one. In the past decade many authors and speakers have been addressing the need for ministries that appeal to the gifts, strengths, abilities and passions that God hardwired into men. Many churches have begun incorporating outdoor activities such as hunting, fishing and shooting sports into their discipling and outreach ministries. FHFH is a natural addition as it enables men to turn their God-given passion for the outdoors into a mission to feed their hungry neighbors.

Wilson is a member of Christ Community, Hagerstown, Md. For information about starting an FHFH chapter in your community or to make a tax-deductible contribution call (866)-GET-FHFH, email staff@fhfh.org or visit their website at www.fhfh.org.



*prayer*INTERCESSORS

BY PASTOR RICHARD GUNDERSON

God is answering prayer! For years, we as an Association of Free Lutheran Congregations have asked the Lord for missionaries to go forth. For years the WMF has been so supportive of the work of missions. Ten years ago the leaders of the various ministries began to pray, talk and plan for a third year of our Bible school for the purpose of training young people for ministry.

God answered those prayers seven years ago when the Ministry Training Institute graduated its first class. Two students from that class are missionaries today in Mexico. Since then MTI graduates have gone out as missionaries to the Ukraine, Slovakia, and Bangladesh. Others are doing youth work, children's home work, and other related ministries in the United States.

Our seminary has a very important role as a number of students are either asking about missions, are candidating or have already gone into new work for the AFLC in Uganda.

Congregations are asking if there are opportunities to be involved in short-term mission trips and projects. Others

are asking how they can support the work of missions. Prayer groups are asking how they can pray for the work of AFLC missions in Brazil, Mexico, India, Uganda, and for those missionaries who have been loaned out to mission work in Tanzania, the Ukraine and other ministries.

Yes, God is answering prayer! God is answering prayers that continue to be lifted up to the Lord of the harvest. We thank you for your partnership in this prayer ministry, for encouraging those who have gone forth and those who are preparing to go.

It is a privilege to be serving on the World Mission Committee if for no other reason than to see God answering prayer as we meet with applicants and inquirers at most of our committee meetings. Praise God! The Lord of the harvest is sending forth laborers. And thank you fellow intercessors.

Gunderson, currently co-directing the MTI program at AFLBS, is a member of the World Missions Committee. A former missionary to Bolivia and Mexico, he lives in Cambridge, Minn.

Will you go?

BY MOLLY WIESEN

Are you counting the days until your family goes on a summer vacation? Have you plotted the miles on a map? Will you stay close to home, travel into another state, or perhaps visit a foreign country? Look at the WMF theme verse from Acts 1:8. Jesus brings up traveling, too, only He is not suggesting a trip taken for relaxation and pleasure. He says, "... and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Conviction and remorse came over me recently as I considered my attempts at evangelism. I was reminded of all the times I remained tongue-tied or muttered a flimsy reference to "salvation," and of all the people in my life who do not know the joy of a personal relationship with Christ as their Savior.

Then my thoughts went to the times I had shared Scripture, had written letters about the Lord working in my life, had prayed with someone, and had given support to missionaries. God was reminding me of how He *has* worked through me, as the first half of Acts 1:8 promises, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you ..."

The WMF uses a visual aid of three circles to describe our work as Christ's witnesses. The inner circle identifies our "Jerusalem" — those people in our immediate life situation who can be influenced. These are family members, friends, neighbors, and coworkers. Sometimes these people are the most difficult to witness to because we don't want to "force" our beliefs on them, we are embarrassed, or they just won't listen. However, if we are faithful in prayer, study Scripture, and wait for the prompting of the Holy Spirit, the Lord will use even the way we handle situations to influence our neighbors.



The next circle is "Judea/Samaria," which the WMF refers to as "going national." As a collective group, our prayers and donations support Home Mission churches, AFLC schools, and Parish Education. For some of you, this might also include giving to other ministries that preach the Word on radio, television, etc. It might be participating in a Home Missions work project through Builders Fellowship. Perhaps it's sharing your faith with the stranger next to you on an airplane.

"The ends of the earth," the outer circle of our guide, means going beyond our borders to a world of need. Most of us will not become a missionary in a foreign country. Perhaps a few of us will go on a short-term mission trip of some type. But all of us can pray, and we can give toward the ministries of our AFLC World Missions department. Many of our WMFs regularly send boxes of needed items to our AFLC missionaries. Birthday greetings and letters of encouragement are also a big support to the missionaries. Recently I had the opportunity to learn about how I can provide monthly support to a child in the Horeb Children's Home in India. Other supporters are needed for the children living there.

How far will *you* go to answer the Lord's command? God wants us — our time, talent, and treasure — to bring people to Him. "May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with every thing good for doing His will, and may He work in us what is pleasing to Him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (Hebrews 13:20-21).

Wiesen, the second vice president of the WMF, is a member of Bethel Free Lutheran, Grafton, N.D.

are *they* UNSHACKLED?

BY MICHELLE SATREN

So who have you invited to FLY this summer? You may be thinking, “I’m not even going to FLY; why would I invite someone?”

You may also be thinking, “Who would I invite?” This is a problem.

Your attendance at the FLY Convention is unrelated to your ability to invite someone. We each have the opportunity to support this convention in the same way we support a mission trip. Just because I am not traveling with the team to Mexico, Brazil, or China does not diminish my involvement and contribution to the team. That is the beauty of the body of Christ. We are all one. So when one of us goes to Mexico, Brazil, or China — or the FLY Convention — we each have the opportunity and even the expectation to participate in whatever way is appropriate and possible.

I believe there is someone you could invite. There is a teenager you know who could go to FLY this summer. If you don’t know a teenager to invite, then we have an even bigger problem. You need to know a teenager, and a teenager needs to know you.

There are a lot of things in life that we need to do. We need to eat. We need to sleep. We need to spend time with God. And we need to tell others the good news of Jesus Christ. But do we really believe that? Do we truly believe that God wants to unshackle our lives and the lives of those around us? If and when we truly believe God has the power to transform lives — starting with our own — things begin to get interesting.

During a Sunday service recently at Hope Lutheran in Minneapolis where I work with youths, a man came who was high on drugs. He needs the transforming power of Jesus; how do we interact with that man? Then there is a student who has decided her way is better than God’s way, and now everything she touches turns into a disaster. Another student took a stand against homosexuality in her school and faced a lot of criticism. When we as a church be-



For more information on the Free Lutheran Youth Convention, scheduled for July 2-6 in Estes Park, Colo., visit www.aflc.org/youth.

gin to grasp God’s desire to unshackle us, it alters the way we interact with others; life becomes an adventure.

God is going to unshackle many people’s lives during the week of the convention. He created the world in six days. He parted the Red Sea. I trust that God dealt with Jonah in the belly of a fish. Our God can do huge things in our lives and in the lives of teenagers. I am praying that God would display His glory at the FLY Convention this summer.

My bigger prayer is that we would be faithful in telling others about Him, to declare God’s unshackling power to those who need to hear it. Whether the FLY Convention is a part of that process or not is just a detail.

So how do we get to the point of inviting someone to hear the good news? “Will invite” is the difference between “get to” and “got to.” Do you view inviting someone to FLY as something you “get to” do or even “got to” do? Do you view sharing God’s goodness as something you will do?

So who are you going to invite to FLY this summer? Or the bigger question, who are you going to tell about God’s unshackling power?

Satren, a youth worker at Hope Lutheran, Minneapolis, Minn., is the first vice president of Free Lutheran Youth.

AFLC Memorials

► March & April

AFLBS

George Johnson
Adolf Lindgren
Ellen Flaten (2)
Lucille Dahl
Ernest Johnson
Warren Williamson
Mary Lyon
Howard Ness
Cathy Williams
Sylvia Dahlgren (2)

Adolf Lindgren
Crystal Jenson
Ervin Tvinnereim
Ellsworth
Robertsdahl
Georgina Eckstrom
Orval Speich
Pat Hagen
Marjorie Lenzmeier
Oscar Karlgaard
Glenn Bjerkoger
Leone Flaa

AFLTS

George Johnson
Adolf Lindgren
Dan Braunschweig
Henry Dengser
Roger Swenson (3)
Delbert Erickson
Marie Christensen
Eleanor Hillestad
Otto Brustad
Pauline Iverson
Sylvia Dahlgren
Charles & Anne
Langum
Viola Eldredge

Parish Education

George Johnson
Adolf Lindgren
Marge Bischoff

Vision

Ellen Flaten
Inge Bayless

World Missions

Lillie Mickelsen (2)
George Johnson
Adolf Lindgren
Leota Elkins
Ervin Tvinnereim
Mary Ingulsrud
Judy Ogle
Pastor Phil
Featherstone
Esther Soderberg

Evangelism

George Johnson
Adolf Lindgren
Dave Langland

General Fund

George Johnson
Adolf Lindgren
Arnold Gilbertson

Home Missions

George Johnson

Youth Ministries

George Johnson
Adolf Lindgren
Larry Hefty



The steeple at Faith Lutheran, Mineral Point, Wis., recently underwent a renovation project.

LFL hosts 25th conference

Lutherans For Life will host a 25th annual conference July 6-8 at the Doubletree Hotel and Executive Meeting Center in Omaha, Neb. The theme for the conference, taken from Job

12:10, is "In the Hand of God."

The conference is open to anyone interested. There is a fee. For more information, visit www.lutheransforlife.org.

PEOPLE AND PLACES

New members were received April 8 at **Abiding Savior Free Lutheran**, Tucson, Ariz., including Kenneth Files, Joan Gipson, Catherine and Joseph Zrakovi, Marie and Dale Bieber, and Elizabeth and Leonard Notto.

Members of the Coordinating Committee welcomed **St. Matthew's Lutheran Church**, Millerstown, Pa., into the AFLC. The congregation recently voted to withdraw from the ELCA.

Two seminarian internship assignments have been given. **Marc Rakow** will serve Bethel Free Lutheran, Minot, N.D., and **Eric Rasmussen** will serve Emmanuel Free Lutheran, Williston, N.D.

AFLC BENEVOLENCES Jan. 1- April 30, 2007

FUND	TOTAL (Subsidy)	REC'D IN APRIL	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$361,225	\$35,669	\$145,672	40
Youth Ministries	73,114	7,462	20,198	28
Evangelism	108,236	8,177	34,007	31
Parish Education	107,052	7,280	27,236	25
Seminary	216,097	19,174	67,281	31
Bible School	343,545	31,034	99,410	29
Home Missions	316,413	20,415	87,787	28
World Missions	287,808	16,297	73,381	25
Personal Support	407,198	48,826	185,609	46
TOTALS	\$2,220,688	\$194,334	\$740,581	33
TOTALS 2006	\$1,994,798	\$188,720	\$636,044	32

Goal 33%

These are the Annual Conference-approved budgets but do not reflect all the financial needs of the departments. Contact the individual departments for further information.

Liking people

When I was considering what college to go to my mom made one thing clear. No child of hers was ever going to Reed College.

Reed is a small college in Portland, Ore., with a reputation for excellent academics. It also has been rated in some surveys as the most godless college campus in America. Christian college ministries haven't been very welcome or involved there. But God hasn't given up on the students of Reed.

Donald Miller, the author of "Blue Like Jazz," lives in Portland. He felt God placing on his heart a concern for the students of Reed. He started to get to know some of them and let them get to know him. Introducing them to Jesus wasn't going to be simple or happen overnight.



Pastor Craig Johnson

Miller discovered that the students' questions and concerns were a little different than what some would expect. These young adults, in this highly academic environment, were not outside the Kingdom of God because they had intellectual difficulties with the Scriptures. Their concern was: Does God want me? The dominant question Miller was being asked was: Does God like me?

The students also wondered if the people who claim to follow Christ like them. The students had encountered Christians who said they loved students and cared about them, but gave the impression they'd rather not be around them. People pick up on that. They turn off those who want to impact their lives, but do it from a distance. Miller concluded, "Nobody will listen to us unless they know we like them."

Eventually a Christian student at Reed was found. Relationships with others were developed. With time, patience and the help of the Holy Spirit, a small Bible study began. Miller compares starting a Christian group on Reed's campus to someone trying to start a pro-homosexual group at Bob Jones University. It's not the kind of thing you'd expect to see happen. But with God all things are possible.

Miller didn't just moan about the situation at Reed, the ungodly living and the young minds that are being fed falsehoods. He did something about it. He went there. He

tried to develop relationships and point people to Jesus.

Corinth was a very ungodly place, but the apostle Paul went there to share the gospel. He "stayed for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God" (Acts 18:11). He sent them two letters. He cared about them, wanted to spend time with them and longed to see them know the Lord and grow in Him. If Paul was around today I think he'd go to places like Reed. Is there a place nearby you like Reed where God might be calling you to go to?

Zacchaeus came to the place where he recognized he was doing things wrong. He made radical changes in his

The students had encountered Christians who said they loved students and cared about them, but gave the impression they'd rather not be around them.

life. It all started when Jesus wanted to come to his house (Luke 19:1-10). Zacchaeus became a part of the family of God because Jesus made it clear He sincerely wanted him in the family.

Others had maybe told Zacchaeus over the years he was doing things wrong, but he didn't listen to them. They probably didn't want to come to his house. To them he was just a cheating tax collector. It was different with Jesus. He didn't treat Zacchaeus as someone dirty and dangerous whom He needed to avoid. He saw him as a creation of God whom He loved. Jesus wanted to spend time with Zacchaeus and have him join Him in the Kingdom.

People who don't know Jesus can usually figure out if we're just treating them as projects with whom we have to share God's truth. They'll listen, though, to people who sincerely like them.

Some people aren't always easy for us to like. But by the power and grace of God it can happen. It starts with viewing them not as the enemy but as God's special creation for whom Jesus died. We can learn to like them with the Lord's help. And by God's grace they can come to know Jesus.

something to share

BY SANDRA WEAVER

NEVER grow

It was Dec. 16, 2006. The phone rang. It was the nursing home. My father-in-law was having another spell. We'd made several emergency trips the last couple of years. Sensing by the tone in my husband Ken's voice and the look on his face that this time was different, I started getting ready to make the trip to see Dad.

We discussed the medical possibilities and decisions we might have to make as we drove to the nursing home, but neither one of us voiced the number one concern in our hearts. In his 89 years, Dad had not received the assurance of salvation. Even though he had been influenced by his Christian grandmother and aunt in his childhood years, had read the Bible several times throughout his adult life, had gone to church, listened to Billy Graham faithfully and had been witnessed to by his family and several pastors, he was never able to say more than, "I hope so" or "That's what we believe, isn't it?"

I thought about calling our pastor, but what was the use? He'd made several trips to see Dad over the years. Now Dad was semi comatose, with a high fever, ashen and not responding. When we arrived the charge nurse said the words everyone dreads to hear, "He's dying." We called our three kids, his only grandchildren, to let them know of Grandpa's condition. We sat by his bedside, talking quietly as the nurses frequently checked his blood pressure and pulse.

Hearing someone approach, we looked up to see Pastor Craig coming around the corner. Our daughter



weary

had phoned him about another matter and mentioned that Grandpa seemed to be slipping away. Ignoring all pleasantries and without so much as taking his winter jacket off, he anxiously said, "Would it be okay if I read Scripture to Elmer — just in case?" We agreed, feeling weary, assuming it was too late. He walked over to the head of the bed, leaned down close, read salvation Scripture, explained the way and prayed.

Miraculous is the only way I can describe what happened that day. In his semi-comatose state Dad anxiously responded with positive sounding grunts the entire time Pastor Craig read, talked and prayed. It was his only and last response. For the first time the Holy Spirit gave us assurance of Dad's salvation. Jesus took him home that same evening.

I believe God provided my father-in-law one more chance because He desired to answer the prayers of those who love and trust in Him. Dad's funeral was not the sorrowful event we had anticipated, but a celebration of his life with us and of his going home.

With God nothing is impossible. Thank you, Pastor Craig, for not growing weary and not giving up.

Weaver is a member of Zoar Free Lutheran, Hampden, N.D., where Pastor Craig Wentzel currently serves.